



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

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## EU-25

## Biotechnology

## GMO trials on grape wine given go-ahead in France 2005

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**Report Highlights:**

In the north of France scientists are starting a trial with genetically modified stocks for wine production. The research will focus on the roots of the vines and is aimed at finding a possible solution to the fanleaf virus, which is reported to sometimes reduce yields up to eighty percent.

There is considerable protest against this project and the 70 vines in the trial have been put under heavy security surveillance.

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Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Brussels USEU [BE2]  
[E3]

French scientists are to start trials on genetically modified vines after permission for the project was granted by the country's Agriculture Ministry.

Tests on the roots of 70 vines will go ahead in northern France. The research is aimed at finding a possible solution to fanleaf virus, which stunts the growth of vines and reduces the yields by up to 80 percent. The fanleaf virus is a virus spread by nematodes living in the soil.

An earlier attempt to start these experiments was opposed by an influential group of producers, which claimed that for the wine industry the risks of biotechnology outweigh the possible benefits.

Proponents of biotechnology have argued that specially developed plants could resist the destructive grape wine fanleaf virus and rid vineyards of a variety of noxious bacteria and diseases that affect yields. Today the only treatment against this virus is either chemically, with very toxic pesticides and not always a good effect, or to take away the vines and leave the soil fallow for 10 years.

To reassure opponents of the experiments the President of the research institute has made it clear that there was no intention to make GM wine from the vines, and that all flowers and the vines would be removed to stop any possible cross-contamination with other vines. Under the test area a canvas has been buried to stop the nematodes from leaving the test area.

Also another 1,500 non-GM stocks will surround these 70 vines with GMO stocks to insure that there is no contamination. The 70 stocks in the test will be under heavy security surveillance. They will be surrounded with a two-meter high fence, and overlooked by three video cameras and five big projectors that will turn on the light at the smallest disturbance, 24 hours per day. Also the police will be able to be there within five minutes at any sign of commotion.

The tests will be made from stocks that were used in a similar test at the end of the 1990s. They have been kept in-vitro ever since these tests. In that test a parcel with both GM and non-gm stocks were used with the virus. The result from this test is that all non-GM stocks were killed and one third of the GM stocks. In this recently approved test, the strongest survivors from the earlier test will be used. From these stocks scientists have now taken cuttings that have been grafted with a pinot vine. These tests will go on for four years, when the scientists will try to understand the mechanism of the biologic self-defense in the plant.

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